

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MILAN 00111 191625Z

53

ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 /039 W
----- 036097

R 191300Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSUL MILAN

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4517

C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0111

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 DECLAS 1/19/86

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: POLITICAL VIEWS OF CARDINAL GIOVANNI COLOMBO, MILAN

REF 75 MILAN 1174

1. I MET WITH CARDINAL COLOMBO JAN 18 TO DISCUSS THE POLITICAL SITUATION. HAVING NOW TALKED WITH ALL OF THE SENIOR CHURCHMEN IN THE DESTRICK, THERE IS NO DOUBT OF THE CARDINAL'S INTELL-ECTUAL AND POLITICAL PRE-EMINENCE AMONG THEM. A POWERFUL, ENERGETIC MAN OF 74 WITH CONSIDERABLE CHARISMA, A LIVELY SENSE OF HUMOR AND A CONSISTENTLY MODERN POINT OF VIEW, HE APPEARS IN EVERY WAY TO BE THE PEER OF LOMBARDY'S BUSINESS, POLITICAL AND ACADEMIC WHEELERS AND DEALERS.

2. ON JAN 16 THE MILAN CATHEDRAL HAD BEZN INVADED BY GROUP OF BARELY TEENAGE ABORTIONIST MILITANTS OF THE EXTRA PARLIAMENTARY LEFT WHICH HAD TRIGGERED RIOTING. THE FOLLOWING DAY THERE WAS A MASSIVE CHURCH ATTENDANCE AT WHICH THE CARDINAL HAD SPOKEN IN VERY TOUGH TERMS AGAINST ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH AND A READINESS TO DEFEND IT PHYSICALLY.

3. THE CARDINAL OPENED OUR TALK BY SAYING THAT ITALY'S TRAGEDY WAS THAT IT DIDN'T HAVE A POWERFUL SOCIALIST PARTY. THE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MILAN 00111 191625Z

PSI WAS NEVER ABLE TO MAKE UP ITS MIND AND DIDN'T MEASURE UP

TO THE SOCIALIST PARTIES IN GERMANY, FRANCE OR ENGLAND. IT WAS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, WHOM IT DISLIKED, AND THE COMMUNISTS WHOM IT FEARED. BUT, LIKE IT OR NOT, THE PSI WAS GOING TO BE NECESSARY FOR ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT WITH THE DC.

3. AS FOR IT, THE CARDINAL SAID THAT IT WAS A MATTER OF BACKING THE LEAST BAD CHOICE. THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE AT HAND. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE CERTAINLY NOT VERY CHRISTIAN AND SUFFERED FROM CORRUPTION, OUTDATED LEADERSHIP AND MORE CONCERN FOR POWER THAN FOR THE PUBLIC WEAL. HE WANTED THE DC TO CHANGE AND TO GIVE SOME EVIDENCE THAT IT HAD CHANGED. IF IT DID, HE BELIEVED IT COULD REMAIN THE PLURALITY PARTY. OTHERWISE, IT WOULD NOT.

4. THE CARDINAL DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE DC COULD MAKE AN ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS WITHOUT SPLITTING ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SOME DC WHO WANTED JUST THAT.

5. THE COMMUNE E LIBERAZIONE (C&L) MOVEMENT WAS GAINING GROUND FAST, HE SAID. IT WAS COMPOSED OF DEDICATED MILITANTS WHO WERE QUITE PREPARED TO RISK THEIR NECKS FOR THE CAUSE. THAT WAS BOTH GOOD AND BAD. HIS REPROACH TO C&L WAS THAT IT HAD TOO NARROW A CONCEPTION OF CATHOLICISM AND WAS GUIDED TOO MUCH BY FAITH AND NOT ENOUGH BY REASON. IT WAS DANGEROUS TO ACCEPT THE WORD HANDED DOWN FROM ABOVE UNCRITICALLY. THAT MADE GREAT MILITANTS BUT POOR POLITICS. HE FEARED THAT C&L WAS NOT YET MATURE ENOUGH FOR POLITICS BUT IT COULDN'T WAIT TO GROW UP.

6. HE TOLD THE C&L LEADERS THAT THEY HAD TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE BREADTH OF CATHOLISM WHICH HAD AMPLE SPACE FOR MANY INTERPRETATIONS OF CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES. C&L COULD NOT CLAIM TO HAVE A MONOPOLY ON POLITICAL TRUTH. NEITHER COULD IT PRETEND TO BE A CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION OR RELIGIOUS. IT WAS NEITHER. THE CARDINAL SNIFFED AT ANDREA BORRUSO, THE C&L LEADER IN MILAN AND HEAD OF THE DC CITY COUNCIL DELEGATION. HE WAS ONE OF THOSE, HE OBSERVED, WHO WANTED TO MAKE C&L A RATHER NARROW POLITICAL TOOL. NEITHER DID HE SEEM TO THINK WELL OF C&L'S FOUNDER AND INSPIRATION, DON LUIGI GIUSSANI. RATHER, HE HAD CONFIDENCE IN VITTORINO COLOMBO, MILAN DC DEPUTY AND ACTING CITY SECRETARY (FOR ZE NUOVE) WHO, HE SAID, HAD TAKEN C&L IN HAND AND WOULD BE GIVING IT POLITICAL GUIDANCE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MILAN 00111 191625Z

7. THIS SAID, HE WAS GLAD TO HAVE C&L GROW AS IT WAS TAKING THE PLACE OF OTHER POLITICALLY ACTIVE CATHOLIC GROUPS SUCH AS CATHOLIC ACTION WHICH WERE DISAPPEARING.

8. THE COMMUNISTS WERE INCREASINGLY ACTING LIKE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, HE SAID. THEY WERE FOR LAW AND ORDER, MODERATION, RELIGION, THE STATE AND PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY. OR SO THEY SAID. HE HAD BEEN

APPROACHED BY THE PCI TOP LEVEL LEADERSHIP ASKING HIS APPROBATION. HE HAD REFUSED. HE HAD TOLD THEM THAT THEY WERE ASKING HIM TO SIGN A BLANK CHECK. HE WOULDN'T. GIVE ME SOME PROOF, HE HAD INSISTED, THAT THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY IS NOT LIKE THOSE IN OTHER PLACES WHERE IT HAS COME TO POWER AND PROCEEDED TO SUPPRESS ITS OPPOSITION.

9. EARLY ELECTIONS WERE UNWISE IN THE CARDINALS VIEW. THE DC WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THEM AND NEEDED MORE TIME.

10. ABORTION WAS A MAJOR ISSUE. THE CHURCH WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO OPPOSE AN ABORTION LAW IN REFERENDUM ALTHOUGH IT DEPENDED UPON ITS PRECISE CONTENT. AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, OF COURSE, THE CHURCH OPPOSED ABORTION. AND WHILE IN THE CASE OF DIVORCE, THERE WERE TWO SIDES TO THE ARGUMENT OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF SOCIETY, HERE THERE WAS NOT. HE WOULD OPPOSE TRYING TO LEGISLATE ANY RELIGION FOR THE STATE AND THE CASE FOR LIMITS ON ABORTION DID NOT REST ON CATHOLIC DOCTRINE. IT WAS RATHER A CASE OF A PUBLIC POLICY THAT SHOULD BE SENSIBLE FOR ALL CITIZENS WHATEVER THEIR RELIGION.

11. IN CLOSING, THE CARDINAL RETURNED TO AN EARLIER THEME OF OUR CONVERSATION - HIS FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE LAY STATE. HE WANTED NO STATE RELIGION BUT AN OPEN SOCIETY IN WHICH CATHOLICS COULD PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION WITH THE SAME FREEDOM ACCORDED TO OTHER RELIGIONS OR TO NO RELIGION AT ALL.FINA

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MILAN00111
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1 19860119
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760019-1216
From: MILAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760144/aaaabngi.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 76 MILAN 1174
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <24 AUG 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL VIEWS OF CARDINAL GIOVANNI COLOMBO, MILAN
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, PINT, IT, US, (COLOMBO, GIOVANNI)
To: ROME
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006